



[Mahmood Mamdani](#)

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What remains for us in this part is an extract from Mahmood Mamdani's "Citizen and Subject" (**attached**, and also downloadable below).

Like Issa Shivji and Walter Rodney, both of whom we will come to later in our course, Professor Mamdani is a product of the famous Dar-es-Salaam campus. He is now head of the [Makerere Institute of Social Research](#) (MISR) in his native Uganda.

Note that Mamdani's sense of the word "subject" in this work is different and opposite from the one usually found in communist literature. Here it means a subordinate person, as opposed to a free person.

It is typical of the English language that, just when you need certainty, it gives you ambiguity. Mamdani is referring to the "subjects" of a king or of a feudal lord or "traditional leader".

Neo-colonial class alliance

In the book, Mamdani's principal insight is to recognise the class alliance typically sought by the Imperialists in neo-colonial Africa countries. In other words, whereas the partisans of the working class and other anti-Imperialists will form a National Democratic Revolutionary Alliance of certain classes and fractions of classes, the Imperialists will seek a countervailing alliance of their own, and it is the nature of this pro-Imperialist, neo-colonial alliance that Mamdani probes.

According to Mamdani, the Imperialists prefer to ally with the most backward rural feudal elements, commonly called "traditional leaders" or "chiefs" in Africa, in opposition to the modernising bourgeoisie and proletariat of the cities and towns.

Mamdani regards South Africa as the classic case in this regard, although he quotes many other examples. Mamdani's analysis stands in contrast with common presumptions about the existence of a sellout or "comprador" bourgeoisie allied to the Imperialists in Africa.

This other theory says that the Imperialist monopoly-capitalists tend to work through the "compradors", who are local aspirant bourgeoisie, or bourgeoisie-for-rent, and who do the Imperialists' work for them.

Such compradors do exist, and clearly they are seen to exist in South Africa. Yet Mamdani's scheme reflects the facts and the history of Imperialism better, at least up to now.

Imperialism is in general hostile to the national bourgeoisie.

The typical neo-colonial war of recent decades, including the Iraq war, and the recolonisation of Libya, is a war of Imperialism against a national bourgeoisie that wants national sovereignty and control over its country's national resources.

In the light of this analysis it becomes easier to see why it is that the South African proletariat has long been, via the ANC, in alliance with parts of its national bourgeoisie, for national liberation, against the monopoly-capitalist oppressors with their Imperialist-globalist links.

The Imperialists make a marriage of convenience with the most retrogressive social power that they can find – tribalism – in a pact to hold Africa where it was under colonialism, i.e. partly rich, but mostly dirt poor.

In Mamdani's view, backed with data, it is the feudals who have betrayed Africa and not the African bourgeoisie, whether called "comprador" or anything else. In Swaziland today, we can see a perfect example of this. In Swaziland, the "comprador" is, literally, the king .

In South Africa the Imperialists relied heavily on Bantustan leaders, and especially on the Inkatha Freedom Party, but the ANC was able to form better links with the rural as well as with the urban masses - thus achieving a liberation class alliance that could, and did, dominate the country in terms of its mass support.

The (national) Bourgeois and Proletarians are the modernisers and the democrats, who are compelled by necessity to combine together to fight against the feudals for the democracy that forms the nation.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Mahmood Mamdani, Linking the Urban and the Rural, 1996.](#)
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